

Biden administration is continuing to help streamline distribution, they should, of course, get some credit, but their effort to sprint to the front of this yearlong campaign should not fool anybody.

The President announced another supposedly audacious goal on Thursday: that all adults in all 50 States should be eligible to schedule vaccinations by May 1. Here is the problem: Dr. Fauci said a month ago we would be there by April.

I would imagine by the time we get to April, that will be what I would call . . . "open season" . . . namely, virtually everybody and anybody in any category could start to get vaccinated.

That was Dr. Fauci's prediction last month. So the President's announcement of May 1 wasn't ambitious good news; it was actually a walk-back.

Something tells me that if the last administration had contradicted Dr. Fauci and pushed the vaccine milestone back a whole month, we might have heard about it from the media.

Then there is the K-12 schooling. For months, science has confirmed that schools are remarkably safe and do not surge transmission of the virus. This administration's own experts amplified this before liberal politics got in the way.

In early February, President Biden's CDC Director specifically said vaccinating the grownups who work in schools should not be a prerequisite for reopening them, but on Thursday, instead of calling for schools to reopen right now, the President endorsed Big Labor's moving goalposts. He said that because the Democrats passed their spending plan and because he has tried to move teachers toward the front of the line for vaccines, now—now—schools can move toward reopening. This approach has put liberal interest group politics ahead of vulnerable kids and their parents.

It was reported last week that the following message was posted in a private online group for members of one public school union in California.

Friendly reminder: If you are planning any trips for Spring Break, please keep that off of social media. It is hard to argue that it is unsafe for in-person instruction if parents and the public see vacation photos and international travel.

Further reports from California suggest some local governments may consider using some of the massive bailouts that Democrats sent them on bonuses. Reportedly, one union argues that grownups should get bonuses for things like "an airplane trip to Hawaii when this is all over." A lot of working-class families in the country are struggling through untenable situations—in large part thanks to the liberal dogma that schools have needed lots more cash to become safe—and now unions are talking about trips to Hawaii?

Every day that the Biden administration does not urge schools to reopen safely right now with simple pre-

cautions, it hurts kids who cannot afford these moving goalposts.

President Biden also made news with the big proclamation that maybe—maybe—if citizens behave themselves, we will be able to have small outdoor gatherings by July 4. He made sure to stipulate that politicians reserve the right to clamp down again, however, but that carrot dangled before Americans was small outdoor gatherings about 4 months from now. This was bizarre and problematic on several levels.

No. 1, let's be clear: The Federal Government does not instruct free citizens how they may gather in small groups with their own families. I have advocated strongly for following science, wearing masks, and taking all the precautions throughout this pandemic. The White House confers a bully pulpit. It does not confer supreme authority over daily life.

Let's not forget that about 10 months ago, many liberal politicians applauded massive outdoor gatherings because they supported a political cause. I am not sure how much capital these officials have to micromanage backyard barbecues.

No. 2, this strange proclamation was out of step with science. Current CDC guidelines say it is already safe right now—right now—for fully vaccinated people to meet in small groups, not just outdoors but indoors, and they can be joined by an unvaccinated household if they are low risk. That is the CDC's advice, talking not about July 4 but right now. Right now.

So the President went on national TV to move the goalposts way beyond what his own CDC is saying. Why? There is no science-based reason why a few fully vaccinated people couldn't get together outdoors right now—not July 4; today. And if a healthy young adult who is still waiting for the vaccine wants to meet up with a few vaccinated relatives, that is about a personal assessment of a very small risk, not a matter of Presidential policy.

That brings me to point three. The President's proclamation was far out of step with what is already happening across the country. It was advice for an alternate universe. The President and his advisers may need to get out more. Americans are already getting together in small groups outdoors in blue States and red States, in small towns and big cities. The country is not locked down waiting for July 4.

In my home State of Kentucky, the Governor has backed indoor gatherings of up to eight people from up to two households. Here in the District of Columbia, as of next week, outdoor gatherings of up to 50 people will be permitted—50 people here in the District.

Americans are getting vaccines. They have learned about this disease. They have learned about the low risks of outdoor transmission. They are making their own determinations as free people.

Look, I have been a consistent advocate for following the science, wearing

a mask, and taking precautions. I believe we should all keep following the science. Nobody wants to fumble the ball on the 5-yard line. But that doesn't mean just citizens; it means politicians too. And science doesn't only run in the direction of more restrictions.

The American people were told 12 months ago that accepting major disruptions for a limited time would flatten the curve and prevent a healthcare collapse, and Americans rose to the occasion.

One year on, if the President and his administration want to continue to give advice to free citizens, I suggest they exit the alternate universe, stick to the actual science, and get acquainted with where the American people actually are.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of DEBRA ANNE HAALAND, of New Mexico, to be Secretary of the Interior.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS OF LISA MONACO AND VANITA GUPTA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, last week, my friend and colleague, the senior Senator from Texas, came to the floor to speak about two highly qualified nominees seeking senior positions in President Biden's Justice Department—Lisa Monaco and Vanita Gupta.

I was pleased to hear Senator CORNYN express support for Lisa Monaco. She is nominated to be the Deputy Attorney General. She has vast experience and deep ties to the Department. She has served in multiple roles as both a career employee and a Senate-confirmed official. She is also someone who has predicted and responded to several of the greatest threats of our time, including global pandemics and the rise of domestic terrorism. She has what it takes to serve as the No. 2 person in the Department of Justice and along with the Attorney General, Merrick Garland, to restore independence and integrity in that Department.